



IN THE LOOP

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July 2, 2010

News of Eastminster Presbytery

General Assembly's Meeting in Minneapolis

For the 219th time, Presbyterians will gather together for a General Assembly. The 712 commissioners will be outnumbered by visitors, observers, and governing body staff (such as Stated Clerk Dale Riley and myself). The commissioners will be dealing with quite a few heavyweight issues this year: a new Form of Govern-

ment (the G-part of the Book of Order), marriage and civil unions, the future of synods (will they continue to exist, and if so, in what form?), the shaping of presbyteries, and a revisiting of the ordination issues. Along with the issues that tend to get the attention of the media are a myriad of decision the commissioners will be called on to

make. Please pray for the commissioners to the 219th General Assembly that they may discern the will of God for our church and world.

In Christ's service together,
Dan Schomer
General Presbyter



What to Look For...

I will arrive at General Assembly on July 6, the evening before the first plenary session at which commissioners will be acting on overtures and recommendations. My plan is to keep you "In the Loop" during the plenary sessions on July 7, 8, & 9.

Here's what I'll be looking for as the commissioners debate and vote:

•**The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Revised Form of Government:** While it is briefer than the current Form of Government, it doesn't save much paper. My unscientific measurements tell me that it reduces the size from 1/4 inch to 3/16 inch thickness. There are fewer words, but also greater flexibility. Before you get excited, understand that the FOG Task Force couldn't change the well-known ordination

and property paragraphs. (G-6.0106b become G-2.0104b). The spirit of the new document is to define *what* needs to be done while providing greater flexibility in *how* it is done. Of special note is the return of the terms *ruling elder* and *teaching elder*.

- The Belhar Confession** originating in South Africa will be considered for addition to our Book of Confessions. (See page 2).
- Breaking Down the Walls**, a report of the Middle East Study Committee called for by the 218th G.A., has already generated considerable conversations within interfaith dialogue groups around the country. The report is 1/2 inch thick. It affirms Israel's legitimacy as a state, but challenges many of Israel's actions toward the Palestinian people.

- The report on **marriage and civil union** calls for maintaining the church's historic definition of marriage, but also suggests further discussions by presbyteries and congregations on their beliefs and practices.
- Ordination** will again receive the spotlight as more overtures from presbyteries focus on this issue than any other. While some believe it's time to take a break from debating this issue, others sense it is critical to consider it again.
- Friends at G.A:** Will you be attending G.A.? Dale Riley and I are hosting an Eastminster dinner on Thursday evening, July 8. We'd love to reserve a seat for you. Email me to make a reservation!

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Fun Facts

Can't compete with the mega churches? Why try? We have neighbors! Heritage Presbyterian Church, Poland, Pleasant Grove Presbyterian Church, Youngstown, and St. Luke's Roman Catholic Church, Boardman, are combining their efforts with a shared Vacation Bible School July 12-15 at the Pleasant Grove Church. A church is never too small to tackle a ministry as long as it has neighbors!

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together!**

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Quote of the Week

We believe

that God's life giving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity, that God's life giving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world;

that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian, but in which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity;

that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.

Excerpt from the *Belhar Confession*

Around Eastminster Presbytery

The **Presbytery Center** will be closed on Monday, July 5, in observance of Independence Day.

I'm saddened to share with you that **Arlene McCowin**, Eastminster Presbytery's Financial and Clerical Assistant since March, 2007, has resigned due to chronic pain related to disc problems in her neck. We have been blessed by Arlene's fine work, high commitment, and gentle spirit. We hope to provide you with an opportunity in the near future to thank Arlene.

The Personnel Committee is in the process of searching for a new **Financial & Clerical Assistant**. The position is for 20 hours, 4-days a week.

Those interested are encouraged to send their resumes to A. Jackson, Box 316, Mineral Ridge, OH 44440.

We express our **deepest sympathy** to the **Rev. Bob Offerdahl** and his family upon the death of his mother, Joyce Offerdahl, following a serious stroke. Bob and his family depart July

2 to attend the funeral service in Vermillion, South Dakota. Bob asks for special prayer for his father Merle who is 91-yrs.-old. Please keep the Offerdahl family in your prayers.

Keep in your prayers the 42 youth and adults from Eastminster Presbytery who will be attending the **Presbyterian Youth Triennium** July 20-24 at Purdue University in Indiana. Triennium is a powerfully moving event for those who attend every three years. Our thanks to **Marian Bauer**, a member of the Goodyear Heights Church and Christian Educator at Canfield Church, for serving as Eastminster's Triennium Coordinator.

First Presbyterian Church in Youngstown has invited its members and friends to gather and explore ways of extending its ministry to the students, faculty and staff of Youngstown State University. As they continue their time of discernment, please keep them in prayer.

Calvary and Covenant Presbyterian Churches in Warren are sending 14 children and youth to J.B.M. summer camps. Wow! This small yoked parish is served by the Rev. David Black.

A special thank you to **Dr. Robert Gillette** (Poland Church) for his generous donating of time to the landscaping of the Presbytery Center. Bob even appears to have conquered a stubborn vine that Bob and I agree looks and acts very much like kudzu. Thanks Bob!

Mark your calendar for Sunday, October 5, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. That's when the Congregational Resources Committee is planning the **Inside Out Workshop**. If the title doesn't get your attention, the details will. Until more information is forthcoming, let it suffice to say that the workshop builds on the many requests we have received for opportunities to learn from one another what's working.